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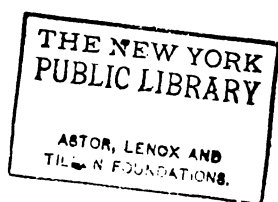




LITTLE JARVIS.









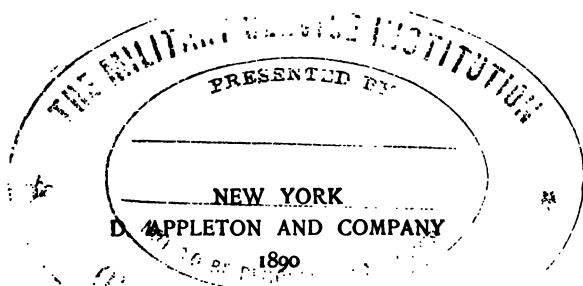
**Little Jarvis and the captain of the maintop.**

# LITTLE JARVIS

"As his life was without fear, so  
was his death without reproach."

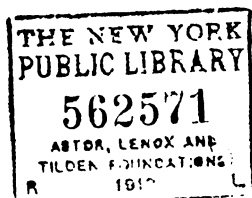
BY  
MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

THIS STORY RECEIVED A PRIZE OF FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS  
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## LITTLE JARVIS.

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JARVIS, being only thirteen years old, was the youngest midshipman on board the *Constellation*, but the most troublesome; and although this was a good while ago—in 1800—scapegraces like Jarvis are still common enough on board naval ships to this day. If the officer of the deck were out of sight for five minutes, Jarvis was certain to be turning a double hand-spring, or standing on his head, or engaged in some similar iniquity on the quarter-deck. As for going aloft for punishment, Jarvis spent most of his time on the cross-



trees, and was always prepared for it, by carrying a book in one pocket and a piece of hard-tack in the other. When one of the lieutenants would catch Jarvis at his tricks and would shout, in a thundering voice,

“Up to the mast-head, sir—up, sir—you’ll learn some fine day that the quarter-deck isn’t a bear-garden!” Jarvis would go up like a cat, and soon be swinging about as merry as a bird on a bough. The officers, though, after giving Jarvis a terrific blowing up, would smile at each other on the sly. The boy was such a merry, active, honest-hearted lad, and his misdoings were so free from anything like meanness, that, although for the sake of discipline they punished him, every one of them liked him. Even Captain Trux-

tun, who had once come upon Jarvis and his chum, Brookfield, unawares, and had caught Jarvis in the act of saying in the captain's own voice, which was rasping and very much through his nose, "Mr. Brookfield, you young gentlemen in the steerage can make the most devilish noises and more of them—" the captain, on hearing this, moved quietly away, laughing to himself—nobody could help laughing at little Jarvis, he was so comical. At first Jarvis stood in holy awe of Captain Truxtun, owing to various blood-curdling tales told him by Brookfield, such as the captain's flogging the whole starboard watch if the ship made less than eleven knots an hour; but in course of time he discovered the imaginative character of these romances. The sailors all approved of

Jarvis, after their fashion. Sitting around the fok'sle, Jack Bell, the captain of the maintop, chewing his quid, solemnly remarked to his mates:

"That 'ere little reefer, he ain't afeerd o' nothin'; and as for gittin' into trouble—Lord love you, if he had a chance to git into trouble and didn't do it, 'twould break his heart." And so it would.

Jarvis had a mop of tow-colored hair, a wide, roguish, laughing mouth, a snub nose, and a pair of the softest, shyest, gray-blue eyes that could be imagined, with a strange, sweet look of innocence, such as babies sometimes bring from heaven with them, but soon lose in this work-a-day world. However, it invariably turned out that when Jarvis looked most angelic he was sure to be plotting some deed of

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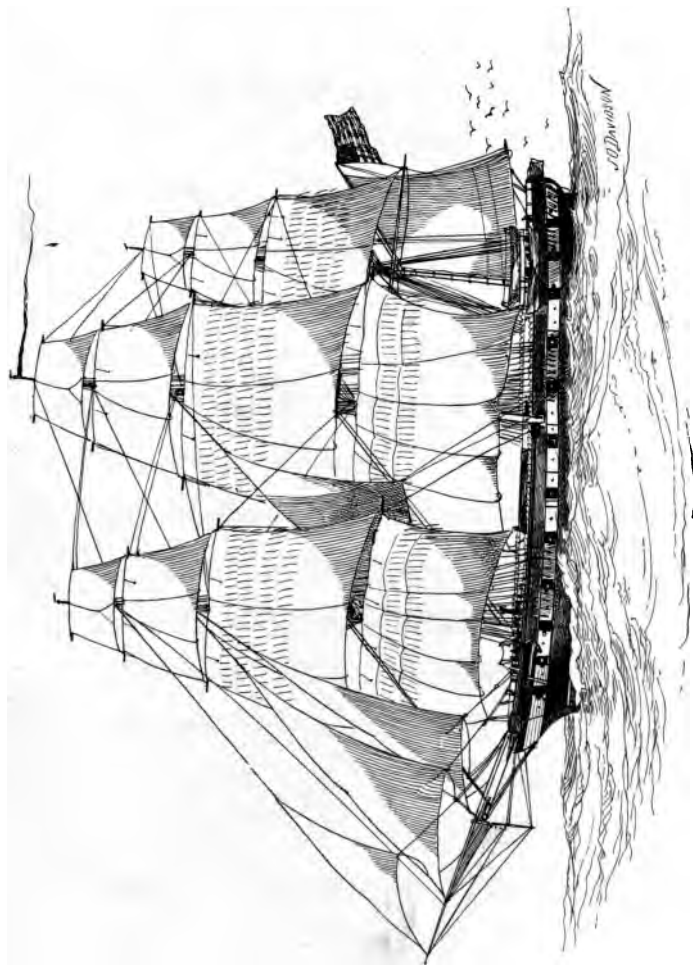
darkness, and whenever he was caught red-handed in mischief, he always wore the look of a seraph rudely awakened.

The Constellation was a trim and lovely frigate and a perfect beauty of a ship. She was not very big, and carried only thirty-eight guns ; but she was one of the cut-and-come-again kind. She could both fight and run away. When she chose to fight, she was a match for any frigate afloat ; and when her enemies were too many for her, she could make off from a whole squadron, ripping it so fast that she would be hull down before they had got fairly started in chase. She was a good sailer in a light breeze and a better one in half a gale. She liked a smooth sea, but she didn't mind a heavy one, and took the water like a cork. She was a lucky ship,

too, and such a prime favorite with old Neptune that nothing amiss ever happened to her. She would go through a roaring gale "walking Spanish," as the sailors said, and come out of it with nothing worse than a good wetting. When she lay majestically at anchor, outlined against the clear blue of sea and sky, the broad white ribbon around her hull revealing the beautiful run of her lines, her tall masts and graceful spars dipping slightly and proudly as the waves eagerly caressed her, Jarvis thought her the most beautiful thing in the world. But when she spread all her white wings and rushed before the wind with the bold, free sweep of an ocean-bird, dashing the dark and curling water impatiently from her sharp bows, Jarvis wondered how he had thought her beauti-

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**The Constellation.**  
(Now the training ship at Annapolis.)

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ful any other way. And Jarvis loved her with all his boyish heart, and thought to be Midshipman Jarvis, of the United States ship *Constellation*, lifted him several pegs above the rest of humanity.

But although Jarvis was always laughing and joking and cutting up, and getting punished for his pranks—which last he seemed to enjoy as much as anything else—he had his troubles. The fact is, he was consumed with envy. He was the only midshipman on board who had never smelt powder; and as the United States was then at war with France, and the *Constellation* had already done glorious things, this was a heavy load for Jarvis to carry. It was nearly a year since the *Constellation* had come across the great French frigate, the *Insurgente*, which was said to be the smart-



est frigate and to have the finest captain in the French navy; and although the *Insurgente* was bigger and carried sixteen more guns, the *Constellation* had borne down on her and opened fire with that terrible and well-directed broadside for which the American gunners were famous, had outsailed and outfought her, and, in spite of the greatest gallantry and skill on the French ship's part, had made her haul down her colors with her decks strewn with her dead and dying. And Jarvis wasn't even a midshipman then!

To make it worse, Brookfield, who was the tallest, the oldest, and the handsomest midshipman on board, and cock of the walk generally between decks, had been one of the midshipmen sent aboard of the *Insurgente*, who, with only eleven sailors,

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had kept nearly two hundred of the Frenchmen below the hatches, and, separated by a gale from the *Constellation*, had managed to bring the dismasted and half-wrecked *Insurgente* into St. Kitt's, where the victorious *Constellation* awaited her. It made little Jarvis very down-hearted when Brookfield, who gave himself the airs of a lord-high admiral of the seas, would tell of those glorious days. Jarvis, hanging over the rail, as he gazed dolefully at the dancing sunlit water, would wonder if he would ever have any share in such brave doings; and then, cocking his smart gold-trimmed cap rakishly over his left eye, would promise himself that the next brush the *Constellation* had with a Frenchman something would be heard of Jarvis sure.

It was the delight of little Jarvis's heart,

when he could spare time from making mischief, to get Jack Bell, the captain of the main-top, to sing him the song of "The Constellation and the Insurgente." Jack was immensely proud of this performance of his, and would drone away, without moving a muscle of his face and in reckless defiance of time and tune, a wonderful account of the fight, beginning:

"'Twas in the month of February, off Montserrat  
we lay,  
And there we spied the Insurgente—"

"But, Bell," said Jarvis, "it was the *Insurgente*—"

"Well, Mr. Jarvis, you may call her the Ann Sargent, if you likes, but in the fok'sle we calls her the Insurgent—and mighty insurgent she looked, let me tell you, sir, when she come bearin' down on us, like she

was a-goin' to eat the little Constellation up, with all them long twenty-four pounders pokin' their ugly noses out o' her ports, and her decks just alive with them horse-marine French sailors, that uses their bag'nets for belayin' pins, *I* reckon. But, Mr. Jarvis, the mounseers fights like the devil. They can wallop a Portygee or a Spaniard as easy as winkin'—or drinkin', that's easier."

"I'm glad of one thing, Bell," said Jarvis, giving his cap an extra twirl and fingering his midshipman's dirk, as he began to strut up and down like a young game-cock. "I'm glad the French are such good fighters, because the next fight we have I'd like amazingly to have a regular hand-to-hand tussle with a French officer."

Jack surveyed Jarvis's four feet and a half of boyish figure without smiling in the

least, although there was a twinkle in one corner of his eye.

“You’re right, Mr. Jarvis,” said he, chewing away as solemnly as ever; “but if I was you, sir, I wouldn’t bother with none o’ them French midshipmen—I’d fall foul of a lieutenant, sir.” Here Jack winked to himself. “May be the fust lieutenant, hearin’ you was aboard of us, will be a-waitin’ for you on the quarter-deck when we grapples ’em. ’Tain’t likely they’d risk their cap’n”—at which Jarvis perceived that Jack Bell was making game of him, and turned scarlet, from his dimpled chin up to his tousled tow head.

While Jarvis was considering whether it comported with his dignity to notice the wink or not, Jack began to sing again in the same curious, cracked voice :

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“ All hands were called to quarters, as we pursued in chase,  
With well-primed guns and tompions out, well splic-ed  
the main brace.”

There was one specially realistic verse; though, in which it was represented of the French ship—

“ The blood did from their scuppers run,  
Their captain cried, ‘ We are undone ! ’ ”

“ Bell,” asked Jarvis, thoughtfully, “ do you really believe the scuppers ran with blood ? ”

“ I dunno, sir,” answered Jack, stolidly. “ May be they did, and may be they didn’t. May be the Frenchmen didn’t know what the scuppers was rightly meant for. They’re droll sailors, Mr. Jarvis.”

“ And do you suppose the captain said ‘ We are undone ! ’ ”

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“I dunno that neither, sir, 'cause I don't understand the lingo. But, Lord ! them Frenchmen says all sorts o' things when they is at sea. They're that ornnatural they'd rather be ashore than afloat any time—even when it's blowin' great guns, and trees is bein' uprooted, and bricks is a-flyin' and roofs is comin' off—instdid o' bein' safe in a tight little frigate like this 'ere, with everything snug aloft, and just as safe as a baby in the cradle. Landsmen leads a deal more riskier life nor sailors, Mr. Jarvis. They risks their carcasses on horses that keeps on bowsin', bowsin' at the bowline, and in carriages that only has one man alow and aloft, and he's got to mind the *hellum* and be lookout besides. The reason I follows the sea, Mr. Jarvis, is 'cause I wants to live out my days,

and I knows I ain't safe a minute on shore."

Jarvis adopted Jack Bell's theory that nothing was as safe in a storm as being at sea; and the next hard blow they had, Captain Truxtun caught sight of Jarvis perched on the cross-trees, while the wind bent the mast like a reed, and the spray dashed over the forecastle at every lurch the ship gave. The captain bawled so loud through his speaking-trumpet that he almost broke a blood-vessel, and Jarvis, who thought the storm was great fun, was so perfectly terrified when he stood trembling before the angry captain, that he couldn't say a word to save his life. Here was a pretty kettle of fish, indignantly thought Jarvis, when, after a terrific wiggling, he was ordered below, if an officer can't risk his



life any time he wants to. Another one of Jarvis's troubles was, that everybody on board called him "Little Jarvis"; and when he remonstrated with the other young gentlemen who shared the luxuries of the steerage with him, he usually got a licking for it. At last this got so intolerable, especially from Brookfield—for this was before he and Jarvis became such cronies—that Jarvis fiercely resolved his honor (which he spelled with a big H) required he should put a stop to it. Therefore, one day he sat down and penned a formal challenge to mortal combat as soon as they made a port, and, addressing it to Brookfield, wrathfully awaited developments. The grammar wasn't unexceptionable, and the spelling was very weak in spots, but there was no sort of doubt about Jarvis's mean-



The challenge.

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ing, and that he was full of fight. He also mentioned that he would not consent to fight at less than twenty paces, and ten would be more to his taste; and he hoped Mr. Brookfield would not consider this suggestion an infringement of "the coad." To this alarming missive Brookfield returned the following reply:

"Mr. Brookfield presents his compliments to Mr. Jarvis, and declines absolutely sacrificing his life in the manner proposed by Mr. Jarvis. Mr. Brookfield, being five feet eleven, and weighing a hundred and fifty pounds, would be an excellent target for Mr. Jarvis at twenty paces—while Mr. Jarvis would be invisible to the naked eye at twenty paces—and if Mr. Jarvis buzzes about Mr. Brookfield any more, Mr. Brookfield promises Mr. Jarvis the

handsomest drubbing he ever had in his life."

When Jarvis read this letter he fairly danced with rage. Brookfield, down in the steerage, stretched out on a locker, reading, happened to glance up, and there stood Jarvis, glaring at him, and evidently red-hot. As Jarvis was not actually five feet high, Brookfield could easily have settled him with one hand tied behind his back, so that Jarvis's ferocious air didn't frighten him particularly.

"Mr. Brookfield," asked Jarvis, in a trembling voice, which he in vain tried to make cool and composed, "did you write this letter, sir?"

"I did, you young rascal," calmly answered Brookfield, laying down his book.

"Then, sir," continued Jarvis, nearly burst-

ing with wrath, "all I have to say, sir, is, that your conduct, sir—your conduct is unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and you are a c—c—coward, sir—"

By the time the word was out of his mouth, Brookfield had jumped two feet in the air, and seizing Jarvis by the collar of his jacket, was shaking him up and down as a mastiff shakes a terrier, while he beat the devil's tattoo on Jarvis's unfortunate ribs. When Brookfield put him down, Jarvis was blind and breathless, but perfectly undaunted.

"Will you take that back?" roared Brookfield, now as angry as Jarvis, "and if you don't, by the Lord Harry, I'll—"

"N—n—no," gasped Jarvis, "I won't take it back—"

In another minute Jarvis was again

dangling in the air at the end of Brookfield's brawny arm. The first shaking wasn't a patch on the second one.

"*Now* will you take it back?" howled Brookfield, stamping his foot.

"No—confound you!" shouted Jarvis, game to the backbone, and stamping his foot back at Brookfield.

Brookfield, breathing very hard, looked intently at Jarvis, who, with folded arms and a scowl that was meant to be appalling on his pink and white face, stood awaiting his fate. Half a dozen grinning midshipmen had crowded round by that time, and somebody called out, "Hooray for Jarvis!"

"Look here, you fellows," said Brookfield, turning to them, "did you ever see anything like the little beggar's pluck? Drat my eyes, but I've got half a mind to

fight the brat anyhow"—and at this he seized Jarvis again, but, instead of shaking him, he threw the boy across his shoulder and began to parade up and down, accompanied by a crew of yelling, cheering midshipmen, all hurrahing for Jarvis, who was kicking and pounding with all his might. In the midst of the hullabaloo, a lieutenant, unobserved, came running down the gangway, and, the first the howling mob of middies knew, was standing in the midst, shouting, angrily :

“What is the meaning of this infernal racket?”

The lieutenant was in a boiling rage. His cap was askew, and when he tried to straighten it he slammed it down on his head so hard that the peak was nearly over his left ear.



An instant hush fell upon the crowd, every one of whom stood bolt upright at "Attention!" including little Jarvis, who, half in and half out of his jacket, had slipped down from Brookfield's shoulder, and stood red and trembling before the peppery lieutenant.

Brookfield was the first to recover his composure.

"I can not tell a lie, sir," he said, with much suavity—for nothing on earth could upset Brookfield's composure. "It was all Mr. Jarvis's fault. Mr. Jarvis objects pointedly to being called 'Little Jarvis,' and because I happened to allude to him in those terms he challenged me to mortal combat, as soon as we make a port. I declined, sir, upon the ground that the contest was unequal, Mr. Jarvis being perfectly invisible

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at the distance he proposed to fight, while I can be easily seen half a mile off. Then Mr. Jarvis came up and called me a coward, and, although I almost walloped the life out of him for it, Mr. Jarvis declined to apologize, and I had to repeat the operation. Mr. Jarvis still persisting in his remarks, though I nearly killed him, I and the other midshipmen present concluded that Mr. Jarvis ought to be rewarded for his gallantry; and we were testifying our respect for him, sir, when you appeared."

The lieutenant, during all this rigmarole, coughed once or twice, put his cap on straight, and managed to keep from grinning, like the midshipmen.

"Mr. Jarvis," he said, in a very meek, mild voice, "I regret very much that I shall have to report you for language unbecom-

ing an officer and a gentleman. Meanwhile, it will give me a great deal of pleasure if you will dine in the ward-room with me to-night."

Little Jarvis could hardly believe his ears. What was it all about, any how? He had called Brookfield a coward, and Brookfield had licked him, and here were all the midshipmen hurrahing for Jarvis, and the lieutenant inviting him to dinner in the ward-room.

"Th—th—thank you, sir!" he managed to stammer, when prodded by Brookfield; and then the lieutenant bowed formally and went off, and the noise began exactly where it had been before.

Jarvis had never dined in the ward-room, and was nearly frightened to death at the prospect. Nevertheless, he appeared

punctually in the evening, blushing very much, his face shining with the scrubbing he had given it, and his hair carefully soaped up. He also had on his newest jacket. Brookfield had carefully coached him in ward-room etiquette, and Jarvis promised faithfully to remember it all; but, unluckily, he forgot every word of it the moment he entered the ward-room. However, he managed to stow away a remarkably good dinner, partly from inclination and partly from Brookfield's warning that if a midshipman refused any dish that was offered him in the ward-room it was taken as a reflection on ward-room fare, and an affront to his superiors; and the officers drew lots as to which one should call him out.

The officers all treated Jarvis with great respect, although there were several sly at-

lusions to duels to the death, and a lively discussion as to whether "code" or "coad" were the proper spelling of a word very much in use among midshipmen in those days. It was generally agreed that "coad" was right, to Jarvis's infinite relief, who remembered he had spelled it that way in his letter to Brookfield. During it all Jarvis, however, maintained perfect silence and great dignity. The lieutenant was very kind to him, although a twinkle in the eye revealed that there was a joke abroad connected with Jarvis; but, on the whole, Jarvis enjoyed himself hugely, and returned to the steerage with wonderful tales of the immense attention, consideration, and admiration bestowed upon him by the ward-room officers. According to Jarvis's account, he had come off victorious in a stout argument

with the first lieutenant, and had browbeat several other officers who ventured to differ with him. Nobody believed him, of course; but as all the midshipmen brought back similar yarns when they dined in the ward-room, it was a point of steerage etiquette to profess unqualified belief in them; so Jarvis's account was received with perfect gravity.

After that, Brookfield and Jarvis became inseparable. Jarvis got no more lickings, although he was still called Little Jarvis.

It was February, and they were cruising among the West India Islands. The weather was beautiful, everybody was in good spirits and hoping to get a whack at a Frenchman, and little Jarvis was so full of pranks and mischief that it seemed as

if he only came down from the tops to get his meals and sleep.

One golden afternoon Jarvis seemed possessed. The officer of the deck happened to be his friend, the lieutenant, who winked at everything, until he suddenly turned around and caught Jarvis in the act of a sword - swallowing performance, which wasn't exactly suited to an officer and a gentleman on the quarter-deck. So, in five minutes, Jarvis was enjoying as usual the fine view afforded from the cross-trees. At first it was quite jolly up there, the sun shone so bright, and the salt air was so clear and fresh as the ship flew before the wind. Besides, Jarvis had a pencil and paper and some lead bullets in his pocket, and, having a knack of drawing, he drew a number of pictures of his whilom friend,

the lieutenant, representing him in numerous grotesque and humiliating situations. These he rolled carefully up into a wad with a bullet in it, and dropped at Brookfield's feet as that young gentleman strolled leisurely along the deck. But, strangely enough, Brookfield did not see the wad, and not ten minutes afterward the lieutenant came briskly along and picked it up. At that, little Jarvis uttered a long and dismal whistle, and looked far across the dancing water.

"I'm in for it now," he groaned to himself.

Down in the ward-room that night the lieutenant suddenly remembered little Jarvis's pictures. He took the wad out of his pocket and spread the scraps of paper carefully out on the table. There was the



lieutenant on his knees before a preposterous young lady in ringlets. Again he was bestriding a very lean donkey, who was in the act of shooting him into space, and underneath was scrawled, in a big, boyish hand, "Aint he a grate luetenant now."

The lieutenant got to laughing, and the other officers around the table joined in.

"Clever little rascal, that Jarvis," they all said.

"By Jove!" suddenly exclaimed the lieutenant, "I sent the little scamp aloft about five o'clock and forgot all about him!"

The lieutenant was a kind-hearted fellow, and he hurried up on deck, feeling remorseful for all the long hours that little Jarvis had been aloft.

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The night had fallen, and with it had come that vast loneliness which only the ocean knows. Little Jarvis for once got a little down-hearted and forgot to whistle. It was quite dark, and the moon had not risen, although the stars were kindled in the blue-black sky. The ship was cutting fast through the water, the breeze was fresh, and as a gust occasionally struck the great mainsail, it flapped loudly, with a weird, reverberating sound. And besides being dark and dismal on little Jarvis's perch, it was cold and very lonesome. Jarvis began to think what a jolly time the other fellows were having down in the steerage, where it was warm and light, and it was getting to be supper-time, too. They were all skylarking, no doubt; the steward was probably begging them to let him have the table

to serve supper; but as it was a favorite amusement to turn the table bottom upward, while the reefers piled in and slid up and down as the ship lurched, sometimes it was half an hour before they would let the much-badgered steward have it. Presently, though, as Jarvis looked about, he saw in the half darkness, a long way off, a mere speck. It might be a sail. Jarvis, who had the sharpest eyes on board, concluded to watch that speck, and meanwhile try and keep his mind off his supper, of which there was at present a very slim prospect. The lieutenant, presently, hurrying along the deck, heard a sweet boyish voice far up aloft singing:

“Strike eight bells, call the watch,  
• Relieve the wheel and chain;  
Won't we have a jolly time  
When we get home again.”

The "home again" had a little pathetic sound. Jarvis's song wasn't as merry as usual; it was sad, and chimed in with the time—night upon the ocean.

"Poor little chap!" thought the lieutenant, and calling out very loud, "Jarvis!" got a cheery "All right, sir," as if the boy had not been swinging up there for hours and hours in the darkness, and seeing the night descend upon the sea.

It seemed scarcely a moment before Jarvis had landed on deck. He went up to the lieutenant eagerly.

"If you please, sir," he said, saluting, "there's a sail off the port-quarter. I tried to call out, but nobody heard me—and I believe it's a big frigate."

At that moment the lookout on the quarter sung out, "Sail, ho!"

The officers came running up from below. A sail might mean a French ship-of-war. None of them could make out anything but a shadow, like the ghost of a ship, moving on the dim horizon; but Jarvis stuck to it stoutly that it was a frigate; and sure enough, within an hour, when the silver moon rose in the heavens and flooded the sea with its white radiance, the stranger was near enough for her port-holes to be counted. She was the *Vengéance*, one of the great fifty-four-gun frigates of the French navy.

Oh, what joy and exultation there was among the brave fellows on the *Constellation*! What a trouncing they meant to give the *Vengéance*, just as they had given the *Insurgente* the year before! And it would be no child's play either, but a fair

and square fight, for the French were not easily beaten at the guns, and fought like good men and true; and this suited the Constellation's men exactly. From the captain down to little Jarvis, all were as merry as grigs, and when the orders were given to shorten sail the men sprang into the rigging with a ringing "Ay, ay, sir!" such as sailors only give when there is a prospect of glory and prize-money ahead. And then the Constellation, with three ensigns flying, as she hauled by the wind, and stood boldly for the French ship, seemed to be saying, "Do you want to see the ship that whipped the Insurgente? Well, here I am. And am I not a beauty? And my brave lovers—see what gallant sailor-men they are, and every one of them would die for me!"

The Vengeance, however, did not appear

Jarvis stopped short.

"That's all right," said the lieutenant, cheerily. "But you won't think about that when the music begins that we are going to make the Frenchmen dance to. And, my lad, don't—don't let your fears get the upper hand—"

"Fears!" answered little Jarvis, in a surprised voice, and opening his round, innocent eyes very wide indeed—for it had never dawned upon him that anybody could think he was scared, "I ain't afraid, sir!"

The lieutenant looked at Jarvis and smiled, the boy's surprise was so genuine, and the idea of fear was so novel to him; and he smiled more than ever when Jarvis, giving his cap a particularly fierce and warlike cock, continued in a tone of savage determination: "And I ain't going to ask

for quarter either, sir, not if I see ten Frenchmen coming at me at once when we board 'em—because it says in the regulations, 'If an officer ask for quarter, he shall suffer death'; and that ain't the way *I* want to die!"

The lieutenant, still smiling, raised his cap and shook little Jarvis's hand.

"I don't think you will die that way," he said, briefly.

But then, seeing they were gaining fast on the *Vengéance*, Captain Truxtun called his officers around him and made them a short speech before they took their stations. Now, Jarvis had known all the time, of course, that his station was in the maintop; but although whenever they went to quarters he found himself aloft, he had always cherished a wild dream that at the actual



time of battle, by some sort of hocus-pocus, he would be able to be on deck, cutting down French officers with his midshipman's dirk, or sparing their lives, perhaps, while taking their swords. But all of these splendid visions melted away, when, without any of the startling breaks in the routine that Jarvis fondly hoped would keep him on deck, he had to march off to go aloft. If Jarvis had not been an officer and a gentleman, and if boohooing at the moment of going into action had not been decidedly unbecoming, Jarvis would certainly have cried right out at the doleful idea that he wasn't to be in the thick of the fight.

And, to make it worse, he heard Captain Truxtun, who was careful of his younger officers, say something to Jack Bell, who was a very steady, reliable old man-of-

war's-man, about keeping an eye on Mr. Jarvis; and Brookfield, who had a splendid station, grinned at Jarvis, and, thrusting out his tongue in a very exasperating manner, remarked that Jarvis would be taken for a fly on the mast. When Jarvis, looking very sulky and disappointed, passed the lieutenant, his face was so dismal that the lieutenant patted him on the back to comfort him, and said, kindly: "Never mind, Mr. Jarvis, you won't miss all the fun."

"Yes, I will," answered little Jarvis, almost crying. "I can't do any fighting, and I can't join the boarders; the captain thinks, because I'm such a little fellow, I can't fight, and—and—it's deuced hard, that it is!"

For the first time in his life little Jarvis went aloft very slowly and unwillingly. The men were already in the top, and there

was Jack Bell, who was to take care of him as if he were a baby; and this was almost more than poor little Jarvis could stand.

But just before midnight, when the moon shone brilliantly, seeing the Constellation was right upon her, the Vengeance sullenly hove to and hoisted her ensign. Then the Constellation hove to as well, and on both ships the drums beat to quarters at the same moment. On board the Constellation the sailors went to their guns dancing, and every gun captain turned a handspring over his gun for good luck. The ship was cleared for action, her decks sanded to prevent their becoming slippery with blood, her battle-lanterns lighted, and Captain Truxtun, standing in the lee-gangway, spoke the Vengeance and demanded her surrender to the United States. A

fresh breeze was blowing, enabling both ships to manœuvre, and the sea was as light as day. The *Vengéance* came up a little to the wind, and the *Constellation* doubled on her quarter. As the two frigates neared each other, each stripped to her fighting canvas, both crews cheered loudly. The *Constellation* was now close upon the *Vengéance*, and the French ship opened the ball with her heavy stern and quarter-guns. The American gunners, with lighted matches, awaited the order to fire, which seemed long in coming. But Captain Truxtun, paying no more attention to the terrific cannonade than if it had been bird-shot, deliberately ranged up within half a pistol-shot of the *Vengéance*, and, taking up a position on her weather quarter, suddenly burst upon her with the fire of eighteen

guns at once. When the first broadside struck the *Vengéance* it was like the shock of an earthquake. The whole side of the *Constellation* seemed a mass of flame, and the American gunners loaded and fired so fast that the people on the *Vengéance* thought the *Constellation* was afire. The Frenchman answered back, directing his fire toward the spars and rigging of the *Constellation*. Little Jarvis, hanging on to the top, had a queer sensation when the first round-shot passed close to him; but Jack Bell made him laugh by saying, gravely:

“Them Frenchmen ain’t pertickler where they puts their shot. If that ’ere one had been in the hull now, ’twould ’a done some good.”

But presently it began to get lively up there. The smoke was so thick that nothing

could be seen on deck except the constant deadly flash of the guns as they were rapidly fired. Up on his perch Jarvis could hear the frightful thunder of the guns, the hoarse orders of the officers, the fierce cheering of the men as every shot struck the Frenchman's hull, the sudden, wild shriek of a wounded man, and the cries of the Frenchmen, who fought their ship bravely and skillfully, but who found, as others did later, that there was no standing up against the matchless gunnery of the Americans.

"I allers said that 'ere little reefer didn't have no more dodge in him than the main-mast," said Jack Bell to the men in the top, watching little Jarvis, who couldn't do any fighting, but who was cheering as loud as anybody and waving his dirk frantically.

"Give it to her, men!" bawled Jarvis,

entirely forgetting that there was no more chance of his chirp being heard than of a sea-gull's cry in the roar of battle. "Let her have it!, Hooray, hooray!"

For three long hours of the moonlit night the battle raged. The Frenchmen had the loss of the *Insurgente* to avenge, and the Americans were inspired by remembering that, with the same ship and the same captain, they had been victorious in one of the greatest single-ship fights ever fought, and against one of the most gallant enemies in the world. Part of the time both ships were running free, side by side, exchanging broadsides, but at last the *Constellation* shot ahead, and, luffing up short under the bows of the *Vengéance*, was ready with every gun to rake her. The Frenchman, terribly disabled and his decks encumbered with his



"For three long hours of the moonlit night the battle raged."





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wounded, made a desperate effort to sheer off, but the *Constellation* only moved up closer for a yard-arm-and-yard-arm fight. One by one the guns of the *Vengéance* were being silenced, her decks were running with blood, and she rolled a helpless hulk in the trough of the sea. But the brave Frenchmen gave no sign of surrender, and apparently were determined to go down with their ship. Three times had her ensign been shot away, and twice had a young French sailor sprung aloft, braving the fire of the American sharp-shooters, to lash another tricolor to the mast, for there were no halyards left to run a flag up on. As he went up the first time, with the flag wrapped round his neck, the sulphurous smoke was drifted off in a sudden gust of wind, and Jarvis, with all the men in the top, saw him

plainly in the bright moonlight. Jack Bell raised his musket to fire at him, but Jarvis laid his hand upon the sailor's shoulder.

"Don't, Bell ! he's such a brave fellow," he said.

"It *would* be a pity to kill that 'ere chap now," said Jack, nevertheless keeping his musket at his shoulder. "'E'll be a sailor sure enough one o' these days, when he's growed up, if I let him be."

The young sailor, who saw Jack Bell deliberately taking aim at him, took off his cap and waved it defiantly before he lashed the flag to the mast, amid wild cheering from his comrades on the Vengeance. But when he saw Jarvis's gesture, and that Jack Bell did not fire, he lifted his cap, and bowed and smiled. Jarvis was delighted, and lifted his cap too.


“Lord, Lord!” said Jack Bell, shaking his head solemnly, “may be we ain’t a-fight-in’ for our lives and our countries, and these ’ere planks that is all we’ve got between we and Davy Jones’s. May be we’re at a dancing-school, where we larns manners and sich.”

The second time the ensign was shot away the young sailor climbed up again to replace it. This time he waved the flag at Jarvis, and Jarvis took off his cap and waved it round and round a dozen times in response. The third time the flag disappeared there was no one to replace it. The young sailor lay dead in his blood on the deck of the *Vengeance*, and so many of her men were killed and wounded that there were scarcely enough left to work those of her guns that were not disabled. But the

Frenchmen stood gallantly to their ship, the officers encouraging the men by word and by example. Little Jarvis saw a grizzled officer, bareheaded, his face grimed with blood and powder, and one epaulet gone, rush up to a gun, of which half the crew lay dead around it, and with the help of several other officers the gun was manned, and well manned, for an instant later a double shot came crashing through the Constellation's rigging and struck the mainmast. A shout went up from below as the mast tottered, and the men rushed aloft to secure it. But it was too late. As the tall mast swayed frightfully, Jack Bell turned to little Jarvis and said, coolly :

“ Mr. Jarvis, she's a-goin' ! ”

It was now three o'clock in the morning. The moon was going down, and there



was a kind of ghostly half-light, through which little Jarvis's face could be seen. The *Vengéance* at that moment increased her fire, the men inspired by the example of their officers; and the *Constellation* answered her loudly.

"We can hold on awhile yet, can't we, Bell?" asked Jarvis, with a coolness equal to the veteran sailor's.

"No, sir," said Jack Bell, shaking his head. They were now being tossed fearfully about, and the awful crackling of the mast, to which they clung desperately, had begun. "And 'tain't no shame for a man to leave his post when he can't stay there no longer, Mr. Jarvis."

"Not for a man—but I'm—I'm—an officer—and an officer must die at his post—"

Jarvis jerked the words out above the frightful crashing and swaying of the mast, the furious uproar of the fight. With a steady eye and a smile on his handsome, boyish face, he looked down below; but the black and drifting smoke was so thick he could not see the captain. The men, at that ominous breaking and swaying, without waiting for orders, were climbing down, catching at anything in their way.

"For God's sake!" cried Jack Bell, preparing to leap. His face was white and desperate, and his harsh voice was imploring. But little Jarvis, with all of his intrepid soul shining out of his unflinching eyes, did not move an inch. There was a strange light upon his face, and a manly and heroic calmness had taken the place of his boyish excitement.



"With a steady eye he looked down below."



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"No," he said, "I can not leave my station; if the mast goes, I must go with it."

Then a terrible cry went up from below. The wind had cleared the heavy smoke away for a moment, and those on deck saw the great mainmast, after the grinding sound of breaking, reel like a drunken man and topple over with a crash that made every timber in the Constellation tremble. It was as if the noble ship groaned and shuddered with the agony of that blow. The men in the top had managed to save themselves by leaping and hanging on to the shrouds and rigging. But little Jarvis came down with the mast.

The captain ran to him, and lifted the boy's head upon his knee—but he was quite dead, wearing still on his young face the brave smile with which he had faced

when she went into action, had lost forty men and only one officer — little Jarvis. They buried him at sea that night, just at the solemn hour that he had been swinging about aloft the night before, singing so cheerily :

“ Won't we have a jolly time  
When we get home again ? ”

The officers and men, standing on the quarter-deck with uncovered heads, gazed with a sort of reverence at the small body wrapped in the flag—for he was little Jarvis even in death. He was only a little midshipman, but he had done his duty so as to merit immortal fame. The words, terrible yet consoling, were uttered over him, “ And the sea shall give up its dead.” As the words of the burial service were finished, two of the oldest sailors were unloosing the flag,

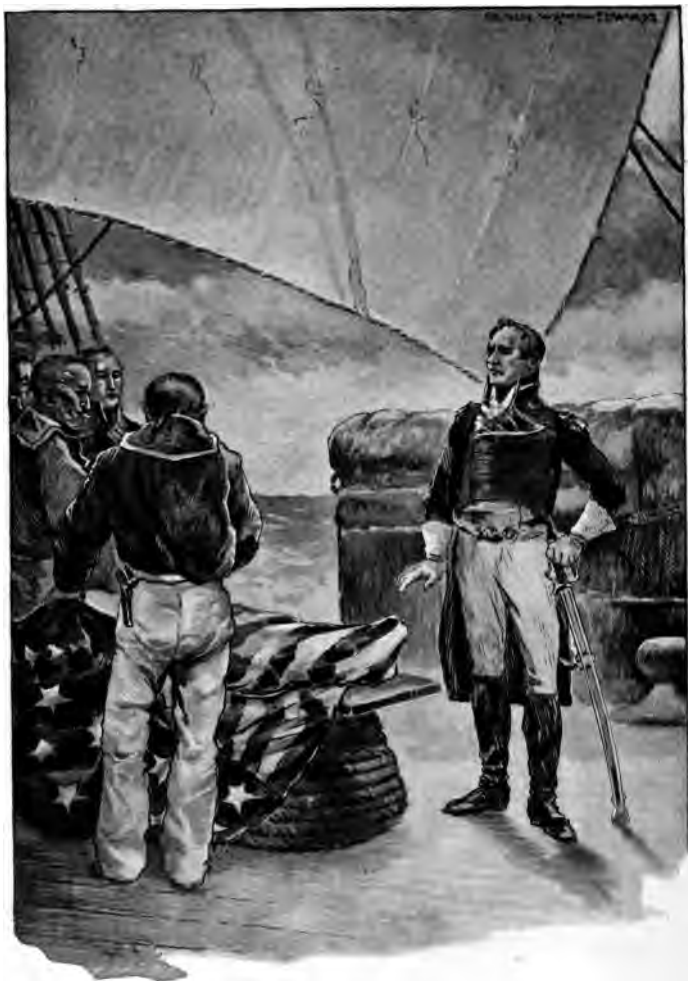
when the captain, his gray head bared, motioned with his hand.

"No," he said, "make it fast. He has well defended that flag, and he shall be buried in it."

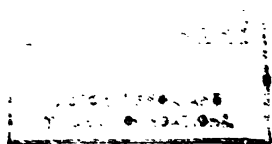
The sailors, with deft fingers, made fast the flag, the tears from their hard and weather-beaten faces dropping upon little Jarvis. In another moment the small body slid gently over the rail, and sunk swiftly and peacefully into the untroubled depths of the ocean. Little Jarvis was forever at rest in the sea he loved so well.

In the midst of the death-like pause, when every breath was stilled, the captain spoke in a husky voice:

"Gentlemen," said he, turning to his officers, "Little Jarvis has indeed gone aloft—"



"He has well defended that flag and he shall be buried in it.



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He stopped suddenly, and his voice seemed to leave him. He had meant to say something further—that every officer and man on that ship, when his time came, might well envy little Jarvis the manner of his going. But he could say no more. What need was there for words? And in the midst of the deep silence Jack Bell, who stood by the rail, with his head and his arm bound up, raised his bandaged arm to his eyes and uttered a loud sob. The captain put his cap to his face and hurried silently below. The drums beat merrily, the bugles blared out. All was over; but to every heart came back the words, “He was the bravest little chap!”

When the story of that splendid fight was told at home, the Congress of the United States, after passing a resolution of

thanks to the officers and men of the Constellation, and awarding Captain Truxtun a gold medal, passed a separate and special resolution in honor of little Jarvis ; and it said :

“ Be it further resolved : That ~~the~~ conduct of James Jarvis, a midshipman on said frigate, who gloriously preferred certain death to an abandonment of his post, is deserving of the highest praise ; and the loss of so promising an officer is a subject of national regret.”

THE END.

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